



# State of Tennessee

Justin P. Wilson, State Comptroller

For Immediate Release: May 22, 2014

## **Brighton Mayor Makes City Employees Do Private Work**

The mayor of the tiny Tipton County town of Brighton directed two public works employees to help build a house for his son, an investigation by the Comptroller's office has revealed.

Brighton Mayor Jeff Scott sent the employees to property owned by his son, Hunter Scott. The employees initially thought that they were going to locate water meters on the property. However, when they arrived, they were ordered to do other tasks, including removing tree stumps, handling landscaping work and digging, preparing and pouring the house's foundation.

During the course of the three days the employees were working at the construction site, they used a backhoe, dump truck, trailer and two other vehicles owned by the town. Mayor Scott oversaw their work during most of those three days.

Mayor Scott told the employees not to fill out their public works department time sheets for the time they had spent at the construction site because they would be paid by a private contractor who was supervising the project.

That contractor, a friend of Mayor Scott's, later told investigators from the Comptroller's office that he didn't have a contracting license and was merely acting as a helper. The contractor paid for the employees' time and reimbursed the town \$200 for the use of the backhoe.

According to three local companies interviewed by investigators, a backhoe would typically rent for \$240 to \$312 per day. Investigators were unable to calculate how much of the town's fuel was used at the job site due to a lack of adequate recordkeeping.

Investigators concluded that the use of town-owned equipment and town employees was an apparent abuse of the mayor's power and created potential liability issues for the town.

The investigators recommended that the town's board of mayor and aldermen calculate all costs funded by the town on the construction project and seek reimbursement from the mayor, his son and/or the contractor.

Also, investigators learned that one member of the board of aldermen had used the town's backhoe at his home on two occasions and public works department employees and equipment were used to spread asphalt on private property owned by another local resident. Investigators recommended that the town also calculate those costs and seek reimbursement from the property owners.

"It is unacceptable for officials to use public resources for the exclusive benefit of private individuals," Comptroller Justin P. Wilson said. "People pay taxes and fees with the expectation that money will be fairly distributed to provide services to all citizens, not just a select few who happen to know somebody at city hall. I commend our investigators for their fine work in bringing these issues to light."

To view the investigation online, go to: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>.

If you suspect fraud, waste or abuse of public money in Tennessee, you may call the Comptroller's hot line at 1-800-232-5454 or fill out a report online at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/shared/safwa.asp>.

-30-

Media contact: Blake Fontenay, Communications Director, (615) 253-2668 or [blake.fontenay@tn.gov](mailto:blake.fontenay@tn.gov)

[Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury](#)  
State Capitol Nashville, TN 37243  
Phone: (615) 741-2501  
Email: [comptroller.web@cot.tn.gov](mailto:comptroller.web@cot.tn.gov)